Daily Eagle

DRIVER AND DROSKY.

FASCINATIONS OF RIDING IN ST. PETERSBURG'S FAVORITE VEHICLE.

Whirling Round a Street Corner Like Mad—The Ishvoshtnik and His Horse. Sleeping Between Drives—Peculiar Harness—The Right of Way.

The drosky is an institution that ought to be introduced into the states. There is one in Washington, owned and used by Mr. Alex. Greger, the secretary of the Russian legation, and it is a great curiosity; but they would be very useful and popular in all our cities, particularly if they could be drawn by Russian horses. There is as much fascination in riding in a drosky as in a gondola in Venice, and it is the first thing the traveler wants to do when he arrives in Petersburg. He will send his bags by the omnibus, and go to the hotel in a drosky. It is a low vehicle, the floor being scarcely more than a foot from the ground, on four wheels not much larger than those of a wheelbarrow—a sort of a miniature victoria. The ishvoshtnik, or driver, sits on a high perch far above the heads of the passengers, who have a low, narrow, backless seat over the hind wheels. It is not uncomfortable, but the sensation at first is alarming, particularly when you are whizzing around a corner, for the drivers always go like mad, and you wish there was something to hold on to. You fasten your hand on the seat with a good grip, and cling to your fellow passenger, if you have one.

The horse that draws you, and the driver who holds the reins are both Russian institutions, and you won't find their like elsewhere. One can find poor horses in Russia I suppose, but very few in Petersburg or the other large cities. They are tall, long legged animals, with slender bodies and limbs, long silken manes and tails, the latter nearly always reaching to the ground, small heads, small feet, large, intelligent eyes, and necks arched like the chargers one sees in pictures of the Bedouins in the desert. I always thought that such horses were the creation of the artists, but Russia is full of them. The ishvoshtnik is always proud of his horse, if he has a good one, and treats him much better than he does his wife. Nearly all the time he is disengaged the ishvoshtnik is either petting or rubbing his horse, and at intervals he brings out a little nose bag from under the seat, to feed him oats or meal.

Not one in ten of these charioteers has a home, and not one in ten of these splendid horses knows the inside of a stable. They live in the harness, in the open air summer and winter, being always on duty, eating when opportunity offers, and sleeping in their droskies between drives. Every hour or two the driver takes a nose bag full of oats from under his seat to feed his animals, and in the streets of the cities convenient arrangements have been made for the accommodation of this important class of the population. Water troughs are erected at intervals, small packages of hay, oats and meal are sold at the shops along the way side, and the ishvoshtnik gets his coffee and his meat at the same places, feeding, as he lives, with his horse. Both horses and masters seem never to tire, both are always on the alert. The drivers are always cheerful and good natured, and the horses always ready to start off like a whirlwind as soon as they get the word. Neither seem to care for the cold or rain, and the one is about as much an animal as the other.

The harness of the horse is as light as leather can be made, none of the straps being more than half an inch in width, and most of them are round, not larger than a lead pencil. There is no breechen because there are no grades in Petersburg; the country is perfectly level. There are no blinders on the bridle, for the horse fears nothing; he will walk up to a locomotive with as much indifference as his master. He never shies, never gets rattled, never runs away, but is perfectly obedient to the voice of his master. There are no traces, as the vehicle is drawn by the thills, which are made fast to the heavy collar with a high hoop over the horse's neck. The collar is a part of the drosky, not of the harness, for when the horse is taken away from the vehicle the collar goes with the latter.

The hoop over the horse's neck, which connects the ends of the thills and looks like an exaggerated, badly formed horseshoe, is called the "duga," and underneath the apex, on equipages in the country, is fastened a big bell—sometimes two or three bells—which jangle so loudly that they may be heard a half mile away. The purpose of the bell is to announce the coming of the horseman, to frighten away the wolves that infest the country roads, and to warn other travelers upon narrow and dangerous highways against collisions. The droskies in the cities were formerly decorated with bells, but they made such a din that the government issued an edict to abolish them. Now, when the vehicle is approaching a corner at a high rate of speed, and it never goes slowly, the driver announces his coming by a shout—a peculiar, prolonged tone like the gondoliers use at Venice. In the winter bells are necessary, for their sledges are noiseless and the ordinary speed is great.

I did not see a whip during my entire stay in Petersburg, but the ishvoshtnik keeps up a continual one sided conversation with his fleet footed partner, now encouraging him with tender, caressing epithets; now stinging him with sarcasm and taunts of scorn, and again hurling at the horse profane expletives. The effective of the driver's voice is peculiar and powerful, and an observant rider will be interested in studying this old relationship. Now the stallion, and only stallions are used, "is precious to the soul" of the ishvoshtnik, or is his "tender dove," a few moments later he is accused of being something entirely different, in terms that cannot be printed here, and the horse seems to understand every word.

When the reins are tightened the horse goes; when they are relaxed he stops. The drivers also use a queer sound made by rolling the tongue, a sort of troll-ll-ll-ll-ll-ll which means business. When the horse hears that he straightens himself out and goes for all he is worth. They never go slowly, but in the most reckless fashion, the drivers jeering and shouting at each other as they pass, with good humored banter, while the pedestrian takes the best care of himself he can. People seldom cross the street at a walk, unless it is deserted. They give a look in one direction, then in the other, and gathering their skirts around them, run for their lives. Vehicles always have the right of way, and it is a popular tradition that the hospitals are established solely for the treatment of unfortunates who have been run over.—William Elroy Curtis in Chicago News.

An Awful Scare.

Society Belle—Mother, Mr. De Brass has proposed and I have accepted.

Mother—What! Oh, you wicked, ungrateful girl, after all we've done for you. Mr. Brass hasn't a cent to bless himself with and won't have until his father and grandfather die.

"The Mr. De Brass I am referring to is the grandfather."

"Oh! Bless you my children."—Omaha World.

For Perspiring Feet.

Bathe the feet in a weak solution of permanganate of potash, about forty grains of the salt to a pint of water; or sprinkle the feet with the following powder, made by mixing together seven ounces carbonate of magnesia, two ounces powdered calcined alum, seven ounces powdered orris root and one-half dram powdered cloves.—"I. V. K." in Yankee Blad

PRECURSORS OF THE PIANOFORTE.

Some Fine Old Instruments Which Lead Up to the History of Piano Playing.

Bernardus Boekelman, a well known teacher of the pianoforte in this city, has recently become the possessor of two exceedingly interesting and curious instruments, both over 250 years old. They are a clarichord and a spinet, or, as the instrument was commonly called in England, a virginal. Historically the former is the more interesting of the two, and it was only by a lucky chance that Mr. Boekelman managed to buy it last summer from the museum of the Brussels Conservatory of Music. It is an oblong box, about four feet long, sixteen or eighteen inches wide, and not more than five inches high, without legs or support of any kind. It has forty-four keys and only twenty-two double strings, some of the strings being depended on for three notes, some for two and some for only one.

The action consists of a simple lever, the key, one end extending forward of the strings to receive the pressure of the players' fingers, the other reaching under the strings. This end is armed with a bit of brass, called a "tangent," which is forced up against the string by the finger blow, simultaneously setting the string to vibrating and dividing off the portion which it was necessary should sound to produce the desired note. All the lower strings are called on for three notes, which proves that the instrument was made before the interval of a second was admitted in harmony. The clarichord, though the most simple form of keyed string instrument, enjoyed the great favor of musicians down to the early part of the present century. Bach and his sons preferred it over the harpischord and even the pianoforte, which in their day was, of course, a crude instrument.

The virginal owned by Mr. Boekelman was made by Jean Ruckers, in Antwerp, in 1622. Ruckers was one of a family of spinet and harpischord makers famous for their skill. In this instrument the strings are plucked by tiny bits of stiff sole leather, placed in instruments that rested on the keys, and were forced upward by the pressure of the fingers. They were called "jacks," and Shakespeare in one of his sonnets speaks of them with envy as being privileged to kiss the "tender inward" of the lady's hand, concluding with the reasonable advice:

Since saucy Jacks so happy are in this,
Give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss.
—New York Tribune.

Writing for a Living.

"The magazine has come to be the pathway that leads into literary society," said an editor of a leading periodical to the writer yesterday, "but the pathway is a long and rough one and unless the prodder is amply provisioned before he begins his journey, he is likely to be starved out on the route. There is no subjection in which there are more generally mistaken ideas than on the remuneration of literary work in magazines. There is a popular impression that the well known contributors earn princely incomes by their articles. People have heard so much about the $10,000 a year which Mr. Howells gets for his work in Harper's, that they think all the better known magazine writers receive something like the same amount for their work. But nothing could be further from the truth. I am quite sure that the contributors, whose names are seen oftenest in the periodicals, do not, on an average, earn $1,000 a year from this kind of work, and that much only by persistent labor.

"I assure you that any man, however gifted, who would depend for subsistence on contributions to the magazines, would soon become a Grub street specimen. Newspaper work pays far better, and that is why so few newspaper men's names are seen in the magazines. An able journalist could earn a sure $100 on a newspaper during the time it would take him to get up a $50 magazine article, which might find its way back to him 'with thanks,' etc. Writing these articles is very well as an adjunct to an income from other sources, but to any one who should think of settling down to gain a subsistence by them I would say: 'You will lead a happier and more comfortable life with the pick and shovel.'"—New York Commercial Advertiser.

Adulteration of Olive Oil.

Cottonseed oil enters even more largely into the adulteration of olive oil than of lard, of which, as now put upon the market, it constitutes fully 40 per cent., according to Mr. Fairbanks' recent testimony. The refining of cottonseed oil is now carried to great perfection, and so clear is the color thus insured that in using it for the adulteration of olive oil there is no longer any reddish tint to indicate its presence, which can only be proved by chemical analysis. The extent of this admixture is sometimes found to reach and even exceed 75 per cent. One mode of readily testing for this adulteration is by the use of nitric protoxide of mercury, the yellow simple basic salt of this chemical combination being employed. About one-seventh to one-sixth of an ounce of this is dissolved in a cylindrical test glass in about one-sixth to one-fifth of an ounce of nitric acid.

On this solution the oil to be tested is poured in such quantity that the test glass is about two thirds full; the two fluids are then shaken together for about five seconds, the changed in color being at once noticed. Treated in this solution cottonseed oil becomes dark brown or almost black, but after a short time the solution becomes colorless and clear. Pure olive oil has a greenish or light yellow tinge, while the solution under the layer of oil assumes a dark red or brown color. Mixed with 50 per cent. of cottonseed oil the olive oil assumes in this process a brick red to a brownish red tinge, and a mixture of 25 per cent. makes orange yellow to red yellow.—Chicago News.

In the Cape Colony Parliament.

The majority of both houses are Dutch, and many of them understand English very imperfectly. They are elected by ballot, according to the law of the colony, in the village in which they live, and as they are chosen according to their popularity as "good old fellows," very little opposition is offered. Many of these old fellows come to Cape Town to sit in parliament after days and days of travel over the "veldt" in their "togt" wagons, drawn by fourteen oxen. In some cases these wagons are staked out in the market square of the city, and afford a dwelling place in which the owner's family lives, and to which he returns nightly to rest after his day's labor in wrestling with his ancient enemy, the English.

During a sitting of parliament many of these Dutch members become tired and weary and drop off to sleep; others sit with their eyes and mouths wide open, trying to keep track of what is going on. When a vote is taken, however, all are wide awake, and all vote the same way—i. e., on the Dutch side of the question. Notwithstanding this clannishness among the Dutch, the English generally manage to pass such laws as they wish, and practically control all government matters. One might think from this that the opportunity for intense corruption existed, but such a thing as corruption in office has never been known. The laws are well framed and perfectly executed. Jury bribing, embezzlement of public moneys, etc., are unheard of.—Cape Town Cor. San Francisco Chronicle.

When a person is "sick at the stomach" ice taken into the mouth in small pieces and allowed to melt before swallowing, will in many instances relieve the discomfort.

Do not leave any tomatoes in the bottom of a tin can, but pour them into an earthen bowl till you want them. This applies to nearly all canned vegetables.

That unsightly excrescence commonly called a wart can be removed by touching it several times a day with castor oil. This is the simplest known remedy.

FOR THE LIFEBOAT.

AN ENGINE NEEDED TO DRIVE IT THROUGH THE SURF.

Perhaps Some Yankee Inventor May Succeed Where British Ingenuity Has Failed—Dangers of Succoring the Shipwrecked—Exhausted Men at the Oars.

It is not a little discouraging to those interested in maritime affairs, and particularly to those interested in devices and schemes for saving the lives of the shipwrecked, to read that the efforts of a committee appointed on Oct. 1, 1887, by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution of Great Britain, to obtain a plan for propelling a lifeboat by some other means than oars in the hands of its crew, had entirely failed. In December, 1886, while endeavoring to save the crew of a vessel wrecked on the coast of Lancashire, a lifeboat and her crew were overwhelmed by the waves and lost. The disaster was of the sort to rouse the attention of the entire British nation, and the Royal Lifeboat institute at once set about improving the lifeboats in service along the British coasts.

Among other steps taken was the appointment of a committee, consisting of Sir Frederick Bramwell, F. R. S.; Sir Digby-Murray, Bart., and Mr. John Thornycroft, all men having special knowledge in the matter before them, to solicit drawings and models from inventors and manufacturers of lifeboats of some new craft to be propelled by some power other than manual labor at the oars; such, for instance, as steam or electricity. The committee were empowered to offer gold and silver medals for the best of these proposed devices, should any be offered, while the successful inventor would, of course, have received a number of orders for boats from the institution as soon as the award was made. Entries closed on Oct. 1, at which time so many had been presented at the rooms of the committee that it has taken all the time of the committee for nearly four months to complete their examination of the devices. Sir Frederick Bramwell, who writes the report, says that no design worthy of a silver medal, or even of special mention, was found. The British inventor having failed, perhaps some Yankee may now succeed.

LAUNCHING THE LIFEBOAT.

The need of some such device for propelling lifeboats becomes apparent when the conditions under which the lives of the shipwrecked are saved are considered. The wrecked ship drives ashore in a furious gale, taking ground perhaps half a mile from the beach whence the lifebost must be launched, and always, too, if along the American coast south of Montauk Point, on a bar a good many hundred feet from shore. The patrolman brings word to the crew, and, if it be night, the men must jump from their warm bunks and hasten out into the wind and sleet or snow that chill them through and through. The labor of dragging a heavy boat over the sand is not enough to warm them before they must wade out into the icy surf that drenches every thread they wear, and then, as the boat floats, leap in and grasp with benumbed fingers the heavy fifteen foot oars and pull for their own lives, as well as the lives of the sailors on the stranded ship. The next wave, if it does not hurl them back on to the sand, half buries them in its freezing cold depths, and then leaves them with coats and wraps weighed down with ice.

Unmindful of the discomforts and terrors around and before them, the life savers struggle on, and eventually reach the lee side of the wreck to find their labor only just begun, and their danger, especially from floating and falling spars, greatly increased. A line must be made fast to the ship, over which the solid water sweeps with tremendous force, and then the sailors, who are lashed in the rigging and are helpless, must be lowered into the lifeboats. It is a work requiring the nerve and strength of a man in his prime, undiminished by previous exertion, but it is performed by men who have been, perhaps for an hour or more, straining every nerve to its utmost tension in the effort to reach the ship.

LANDING THROUGH THE SURF.

One hour, may be two or three, must pass before the sailors are all in the boat. Human powers, even in the best trained men, have a limit beyond which they cannot be strained and stand the test. Encumbered by the load in their boat, exhausted by their labors in securing the load, the life savers at last cast off the line that holds them to the wreck, and with weakened grasp take up the heavy oars to face the gravest danger to which a mariner is ever exposed, the danger of landing through a heavy surf. Small wonder if even the thought of this danger fails to flag into adequate action the worn out muscles of the men, and they drift toward shore rather than row with the wind and waves, and fail at the critical moment to pull toward the open sea, and are caught by a booming roller and thrown headlong into the black depths at its base, and finally are cast dead on the sand, from which they had launched their boat to save the lives of others.

The propelling power of the lifeboat is gone when it is most needed. It ought not to be either a difficult or an expensive thing to provide such a boat with some other sort of driving power. The boat is not hard to propel. It is about 36 feet long, 7 wide and 3½ deep. It is decked over on the plane of the water line, and the hold beneath is divided into compartments, which are usually filled with cork and paraffine wax or some such light substance, so that if the compartment be broken open it will not fill with water. It requires a crew of six oarsmen and a coxswain. If an adequate propelling scheme were provided, one of these men might be dispensed with. After the boat was launched and his weight saved, if the propelling device weighed 500 pounds, it would therefore net but a little over 300 pounds additional weight for the boat, but something ought to be made in these days of tempered steel and aluminum that would weigh less. If some of the men who are taking out patents for car couplers, railroad switches, and washing machines at the rate of a dozen a week, with no reasonable hope of ever getting the price of the patents out of their devices, were to turn their attention to lifeboats, something worthy the attention at least of the Royal National Lifeboat institution, perhaps even of a silver medal, might be produced. When it is considered that such boats would readily sell for $2,500, perhaps $3,000, each, the margin for profit is apparent at least to a boat builder. —New York Sun.

A Theatrical Superstition.

It is a superstition in the theatrical profession that the placard "No Free List" is the harbinger of bad business, as it generally happens that it is rarely displayed excepting at establishments where the business is not good. It is contended that the mere fact that the houses are crowded deters "deadheads" from making applications for the courtesies of the establishment, and that consequently the sign is not necessary. It is doubtful if the display of the sign "Standing Room Only," is not generally a piece of folly, as often people would buy admission tickets if they thought there was a chance of a seat who are deterred by this announcement, which is so seldom true.—New York Times.

A pretty looking dish can be made by lining some cups and saucers with lettuce leaves and putting a large spoonful of the salad in the center.

To lessen the fatigue of climbing stairs do not throw the body forward. Step leisurely and hold the body erect.

White and pale shades of paint may be beautifully cleaned by using whiting in the water.

A spoonful of fine salt or horse radish will keep a can of milk sweet for several days.